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ABSTRACT

Using as a point of departure anthropologist Clifford Geertz's study of culture with special emphasis on political change, the paper develops a theoretical framework for studying the relationship between culture and political change. A major objective of this anthropological approach to the study of political culture is to help political scientists studying political culture lessen their conceptually limited dependence on psychological and socio-psychological theories and approaches. Although in basic agreement with theories advanced by Geertz and other social scientists (Samuel Huntington, Jorge Dominguez, Sall Moore, Barbara Myerhoff, Roger Kessing, etc.), regarding the influence of political culture on political change, the author points out conceptual shortcomings of these theories. These include that social scientists are often hampered by conceptual naivete and that they often treat as reality ideal types which they invented. The proposed conceptual framework seeks to avoid theoretical pitfalls by critically reviewing accepted definitions of reality; considering cognitive and normative dimensions of society; analyzing case studies (particularly from Third World nations) of socio-economic, cultural, and political changes brought about by ideological changes; avoiding ethnocentrism; and reviewing relevant literature on cultural change. (DB)

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CONCEPTUALIZING THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN POLITICAL CHANGE

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CONCEPTUALIZING THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN POLITICAL CHANGE[1]

INTRODUCTION

Although ostensibly political science acquired its concept of political culture from anthropology, most political scientists working in the area of political culture and the symbolic aspects of politics have been more strongly influenced by psychological and socio-psychological approaches and theories. Since culture can not be reduced to psychological phenomena, consequently the work in political culture has been conceptually limited (cf. Aronoff, 1976). I have been developing an anthropological approach to the study of political culture (cf. Aronoff, forthcoming); and this essay will focus that framework on certain aspects of political change. I shall selectively review aspects of Clifford Geertz's anthropological approach to the study of culture with special emphasis given to political change which has influenced my own formulations. Therefore this essay is primarily an exercise in conceptual clarification in an effort to lay the foundation for the development of a theoretical framework for the study of the relationship between culture and political change.

I shall relate this discussion to a critical evaluation of one of the better and more important discussions of political change in the political science literature. Huntington and Dominguez (1975:16) have suggested the need for "hypothesis dealing with the congruence between political culture and political structures and with the consequences of the content of given political cultures for political change." Their main hypothesis, with which I concur and which I hope to develop, is that the relative degree of congruence or incongruence between political culture and political structure strongly influences both the rate and type of political change which a society

undergoes.[2] The greater the congruence, the less likely is change to take place. The greater the incongruence, the greater is the likelihood that change will take place. In discussing the consequences of the content of political culture for political change, I shall critically compare Huntington and Dominguez's treatment of the concept of syncretism with examples which offer a broader scope for the development of the concept.

I have found a few major conceptual problems in much of the literature on political change, modernization, and development. One of these problems is the tendency for scholars to treat as reality the heuristic categories they (or their intellectual predecessors) invented to help them to explicate reality. When scholars begin to treat their ideal types as if they actually exist in reality they are guilty of falling into the trap of reification (a trap which has snared many a good social scientist).[3] Even when scholars are careful to stress that their classifications are ideal types, the way they formulate their problems frequently leads to the tendency to reify them. For example, Huntington and Dominguez (1975:19), adapt Apter's 'consummatory' and 'instrumental' classifications, and clearly identify them as ideal types. They say, "political cultures tend in one direction or another. More importantly, they may be only partly consummatory (and therefore partly instrumental) when only certain types of activity are undifferentiated from the religious and the mystical...There are also, therefore, mixed cultures - partly instrumental, partly consummatory". Since this is the case it seems more useful to look for attributes of both types in any given culture than to compare entire societies such as China and Japan as representing the two different types as they do. The typing of whole cultures, as opposed to specific context-bound domains within them, fundamentally distorts the nature of culture and the process of change. The same can be said for the categories 'agglomerative' and 'assimilative' which Huntington and Dominguez use to characterize major response patterns of donor cultures. Such typologies frequently become intellectual blinders.

Another major commonly encountered problem with studies of political change is a kind of conceptual naivete' which precludes the possibility of conceptualizing the alternative meanings which can be attributed to the same reality. Partly resulting from the intellectual historical development of the separate disciplines in the social sciences, and deeply rooted in the desire of the social sciences to create models of necessity that will yield universal laws, there is a strong reluctance to grapple with the phenomenological contingencies of culture. Yet any model which assumes that all of reality is obdurate is phenomenologically blind and scientifically inadequate. Certainly any model which hopes to come to terms with the reality of the 'Third World' must contend with competing definitions of reality and the processes of cultural syncretism, as well as deal with institutional competition and problems of legitimacy (and the lack of the same).

None of the dominant root metaphors and their related paradigms, e.g. the machine/systems theory, the organism/functionalism, or the computer/cybernetics, does justice to the role of culture and the part it plays in political change. They tend to treat all aspects of reality as necessary, and what is not necessary as trivial. I would argue that the search for laws must include the interpretive analysis of the phenomenological meanings expressed by culture even if this inevitably complicates our attempts to build simplified models of reality. Conceptually we have been drawn seductively into ignorance of culture because of a crude model of the necessity of relations which has resulted in the production of models which not only simplify, but also distort reality beyond recognition.

There is another kind of conceptual naivete' found among some anthropologists who tend to reduce all explanation to explication. They tend to consider all reality as being subjective and discount obdurate reality. This kind of subjectivist reductionism distorts reality as much in the other direction as does its opposite. An adequate conceptual model must comprehensively include both

approaches. On the one hand most analytical frameworks which emphasize elements of certainty and lawfulness in change tend to do so at the expense of non-objective or contingent reality. On the other hand, many analytical frameworks which stress cultural processes emphasize the coherence of more or less subjective elements at the expense of necessity or obdurate reality. Therefore there is a need to wed the two approaches to overcome the respective bias of each. The task then is to create a synthetic framework which can deal with the relationships between necessity and coherence, obdurate and contingent reality, the power relations of political structures and institutions and the phenomenological meanings of political culture. In sum, when attempting to formulate a conceptual framework for understanding political change, it is important to attempt to avoid the two common pitfalls of reification and conceptual naiveté. It is equally important to avoid the assumption that the culture one is studying is after the same thing that the social scientist is after. And finally one must be extremely careful not to distort the understanding of a culture by imposing alien categories on it, a charge which Edward Said (1979) has leveled against what he calls Orientalist scholars. The framework I propose attempts to strike the proper balance and to avoid the previously mentioned pitfalls.

GEERTZ'S CONCEPT OF CULTURE

Eggan (1954:760) has stated that, "the last thing to be discovered in any science is what the science is really about." That may be an exageration, but certainly the most important concepts in the social sciences tend to be those which are most ambiguously defined and over which there is the least consensus concerning their meanings. The concepts 'power' in political science and 'culture' in anthropology well illustrate this point. For example, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) compiled a list of more than 167 different definitions of culture in their comprehensive survey of the concept. Some of the more important

differences in approach as represented in two major surveys of the literature on the concept. The first, by Gerald Weiss (1973) represents an old (and in my opinion out-dated) tradition in anthropology, i.e. a maximalist or holistic approach to the definition of culture. The second, by Roger Keesing (1974) represents a more contemporary restricted conceptualization of culture. I agree with Keesing (1974:73) that, "the holistic, humanistic view of culture synthesized by Kroeber and Kluckhohn includes too much and is too diffuse either to separate analytically the twisted threads of human experience or to interpret the designs into which they are woven...The challenge in recent years has been to narrow the concept of 'culture' so that it includes less and reveals more."

I accept Geertz's distinction between culture and social system which views "the former as an ordered system of meaning and of symbols, in terms of which social interaction takes place;" and which conceives of "the latter as the pattern of social interaction itself" (Geertz, 1967:233 - the author refers to Parsons and Shils, 1951). Geertz argued that, "one of the major reasons for the inability of functional theory to cope with change lies in its failure to treat sociological and cultural processes on equal terms: almost inevitably one of the two is either ignored or is sacrificed to become a simple reflex, a 'mirror image' of the other" (1967:233). He emphasized that the lack of congruence between cultural patterns and social organization provides the dynamic elements in social change. Geertz also stressed that, "Though separable only conceptually, culture and social structure will then be seen to be capable of a wide range of modes of integration with one another." (Geertz, 1967:233).

This last point is sufficiently important to merit elaboration. The distinctions betwen social and cultural patterns, processes or structures or between political culture and political structures, are analytic abstractions which enable us to sort out and differentiate the complex reality in which they

blend one into the other. They are neither synonymous nor are they mutually exclusive dichotomies. They are analytically distinguishable attributes of all human interaction in ongoing groups.

Geertz's metaphor for cultural organization is: "the octopus, whose tentacles are in large part separately integrated, neurally quite poorly connected with one another and with what in the octopus passes for a brain, and yet who nonetheless manages to get around and to preserve himself, for a while anyway, as a viable, if somewhat ungainly entity" (Geertz, 1966:66-67, reprinted in Geertz, 1973:407-408).

Keesing brings out an important difference between the work of Geertz and that of David Schneider. Both view culture as systems of shared symbols and meanings. For Geertz these meanings are public things of this world. He argues that the study of culture is a matter of interpretation (which he calls 'thick description') that must be deeply embedded in the contextural richness of social life. "Geertz warns against the danger of the analyst mapping a culture in such a way as to maximize and neaten its integration and internal consistency - where in fact only partial integration and often disconnectedness and internal contradiction exist" (Keesing, 1974:80). This point is most important for the framework which I formulate, and differs significantly from Schneider's approach. Schneider "believes that analysis of cultures as systems of symbols can profitably be carried out independently of the 'actual states of affairs' one can observe as events and behaviors" (Keesing, 1974:80-81). I disagree with Schneider and agree with Geertz that cultural meanings must be comprehended in terms of the specific contexts (socio-economic and political) in which they are expressed and manifest. Focusing on these specific contexts reveals the disconnectedness and internal contradictions which are essential for understanding processes of political change. I shall argue that different interpretations of reality (which are frequently related to conflicting interests) are one of the most important keys to understanding political change.

> ...note that the actor's 'theory' of his culture, like his theory of his language, may be in a large measure unconscious. Actors follow rules of which they are not consciously aware, and assume a world to be 'out there' that they have in fact created with culturally shaped and shaded patterns of mind...not every individual knows about all sectors of the culture. Thus a cultural description is always an abstracted composite...Thus a conception of culture frees us potentially from the dangers of cognitive reductionism and etnereal idealism (Keesing, 1974:89).

THE PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I have proposed a conceptualization of culture and its relation to politics which is adapted from a phenomenological approach (Aronoff, forthcoming).[4] In several important respects my formulation complements those of Geertz and of Keesing mentioned previously. I shall briefly summarize basic aspects of this approach which focuses on the relationship between humanly constructed socio-political institutions and order (in the face of anarchy), and culture in the form of humanly constructed systems of meaning (in the face of indeterminacy). Social order is an ongoing human production resulting from processes of habitualization, reciprocal typification, and institutionalization. There is no assumption of functional integration in society, but to the extent that such integration exists in any given situation, it is seen to be derived from the creation of socially shared universes of meaning or knowledge. Educational procedures and processes of control and legitimation are required to transmit these shared institutional meanings. Problems of integration of meanings and legitimation increase proportionally with the increasing institutional differentiation of society. Institutional segmentation produces subuniverses of meaning which makes legitimation of the commonly shared meanings more problematic.

Legitimation is a form of meaning which ideally integrates disperate institutional processes and subuniverses of meaning, thereby making sense of the entire societal order. It has both a <u>cognitive</u> and a <u>normative</u> dimension.

Levels of legitimation range from the most elementary to the highest level of bodies of theoretical tradition which encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality. These cosmologies (or what Berger and Luckmann call symbolic universes) as ideal types ideally integrate all sectors of the institutional order within an all-embracing universe of meaning. They provide a frame of reference which makes all human experience meaningful. Cosmologies also integrate marginal realities, and discrepant meanings, order and legitimate everyday roles, order and make meaningful the different stages of life, attest to the 'correctness' of the individual's subjective identity, and the 'normality' of his social identity.

This is a very tall order to fill, and it is therefore not surprising to find that in reality most symbolic universes and ideologies fall far short of fulfilling their 'ideal' role. Light (1969) has criticized Berger and Luckmann for neglecting processes which consistently create mass uncertainty, thereby undermining symbolic universes. In reality symbolic universes and ideology (which I view as representing a more specifically focused form of the political culture as it is manifest in the meanings which political actors ascribe to explain and justify their behavior) contain ambiguities and contradictions, which allow for various interpretations which are frequently related to different socio-economic and political interests. Various technological innovations, changes in the environment, socio-economic and political contacts and changes can undermine accepted definitions of reality. Individual and group differences as they relate to disperate interests and the competition for status and power produce different interpretations of reality. The development of alternative definitions of reality can call into question the taken-for-grantedness of socially shared cultural meanings. The degree to which a symbolic universe is problematic varies in inverse relation to the degree to which it is taken for granted.

As the taken-for-grantedness of symbolic universes is undermined, the confrontation between competing definitions of reality, on the one hand, and conflicts of power on the other, increase. As Geertz says, ideas must "be carried by powerful social groups to have powerful social effects; someone must revere them, defend them, impose them. They have to be institutionalized in order to find not just an intellectual existence in society, but, so to speak, a material one as well" (Geertz, 1973:314). As rival definitions of reality inspire, guide, and give legitimacy to groups challenging the dominant definition of reality and the groups that defend it, the gap between the political culture and the political structure is widened. Therefore my response to the great debate between Idealists and Materialists, or Hegelians and Marxists, as to whether ideas are causes or effects in human history is to stress the need to focus analysis precisely on the 'problematic' reciprocal or dialectical relations between the culturally shared ideas, meanings and knowledge and the materially objective socio-economic and political conditions in specific societal and historical contexts. I propose that the relative fit or congruence between the two is the most important key to understanding political change.

Focusing on the ideological dimension of culture, Seliger (1976) has distinguished between the purer, more dogmatic, fundamental dimension of ideology, and the more diluted, pragmatic, operative dimension. He argues that, "out of the interaction between the two dimensions, which normally signifies an increase of ideological pluralism, arises the challenge of ideological change" (Seliger, 1976:120). Joyce Pettigrew (forthcoming) illustrates how the communal ideology of the Sikhs in the Punjab can not operate as realistic guides to pragmatic political behavior in arenas which extend beyond the boundaries in which they were intended to operate. Sikh political leaders operating within the modern Indian state are forced to deviate from

communal norms in order to successfully function in the national system, but in so doing they undermine the support of their constituents who account for such behavior as personal corruption of the leaders.

I contend that ideological formulations become increasingly more important as the taken-for-grantedness of the traditional manner of doing things is called into question and is undermined. Ideological formulations either reinforce and reassert the meaningfulness of the old definition of reality, alter it to fit new contengencies, or replace it with a new one more in congruence with the changed conditions. This of course represents an attempt to close the gap between culture and structure. Myths are one of the most ancient cultural expressions of moral coherence and meaning. Therefore, as the disparity between culture and political structure increases the likelihood of the invocation of contemporary myths / as ideological expressions becomes more prominent. One of the reasons for the strength of myths is that they present a more compelling and lucid image than do abstract principles.

Myths can also be deliberately manipulated by groups and regimes to mobilize collective action and support. Olcott (forthcoming) evaluates the attempt by the Soviet Union to create a Kazakh nationalist and socialist Soviet culture partly through the alteration of Kazakh myths. She concludes that they enjoyed a rather mixed success, and implies that the success appears to have been the greatest when the new was successfully syncretized with the old. It is also clear that the Kazkhs would like to express more of their traditional culture than the Soviets are willing to let them officially express. Among other things, this study indicates the limits to which gaps between culture and political structures can be closed by deliberate manipulation and coersion. This is a point to which I shall return when I discuss political change in the 'Third World'.

Rituals are another important means of dealing with the disparity between cultural meanings and socio-political reality. Rituals can be used to deal with ambivalent social roles, conflicting interests, conflicting definitions of reality, and with cognitive dissonance between ideology and social reality. Because rituals present aspects of reality symbolically in selective and sometimes disguised manner, they allow discourse to take place which can produce either conciliation, affirmation, or transformation of ideologies and definitions of reality (cf. Moore and Myerhoff, 1977).

I have analyzed a case in which the organizational and ideological changes in the Israel Labor Party brought about by rapid socio-economic, cultural and political changes in Israeli society led a particular set of political actors (the secondary echelon of leadership) to be faced with the need to redefine or to assert traditional values and ideological concepts. They felt the meaning of their roles had changed in public perception and sought to give new meaning to these roles. They did so within a bracketed and controlled ritual setting. The analysis of these ritual proceedings brings out the nature of the increasing disparity between ideological definitions of reality of the party which dominated the political system for fifty years and the rapidly changing socio-political structures (Aronoff, 1976 and 1977).

In Israel there was conspicuously close congruence between culture and structure in the early formative years since the pioneering political leaders who articulated Zionist ideology created the most important social and political institutions to conform with their own particular form of socialist-Zionism. With the institutionalization of the structures of government after independence, and with the influx of masses of culturally diverse immigrants, patronage and machine politics began to replace pioneering voluntarism as the major means of political socialization and recruitment. The growing disparity between a pioneering egalitarian ideology and an increasingly inegalitarian and materialistic society created severe strains which were catalyzed by the trauma of the war of October 1973. (cf. Aronoff, 1978).

Particularly in those parts of the world where colonial powers imposed political and economic systems on indigenous societies structured and symbolized along lines of race, language, tribe, religion, and/or ethnicity, the course of institutional interests and cultural sentiments have frequently led in contradictory directions producing anomaly, confusion, and paradox as well as political change. Frank Manning (1978) has shown how the disjunction between the party system and the cultural system in Bermuda enabled the party of the white majority to dislocate boundaries and to violate taboos of racial segregation, thereby creating logical confusion and moral perplexity among the black majority. Among the forms of popular response to this situation, racial riots, according to Manning, can be understood as ritual dramas which restore order and authenticity by symbolically restructuring society in accordance with its racial classificatory principles. As rituals, the riots symbolically reaffirm a meaningful order in the face of confusion and perplexity. [5]

POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE THIRD WORLD

There is certainly no lack of evidence of this kind of confusion and perplexity and of the reactions to this state particularly (although certainly not exclusively) throughout the Third World. Although the media are full of reports of such conditions, and they are certainly not completely ignored in the social science literature, these conditions are perhaps presented with the most vivid insight in the more artistic literature of fiction. For example, V.S. Naipaul's A Bend in the River (1979) vividly portrays in a fictitious African community the kinds of moral confusion, social uncertainty and chaos, and political repression which, unfortunately, can be identified with all too many countries in which the disjuncture between political culture and political structure has produced similar conditions and responses.

From the revolt against the Shah of Iran to the recent coup in Ghana, there is the repeated expression of the desire to restore moral coherence and meaningful symbolic order. Flight Lieutenant, Jerry J. Rawlings, the leader of the recent military coup in Ghana said in reference to the loss of moral order in Ghana, "This is what's been taken away from us. We've got to get it back. And it hinges on morality and values, the restoration of the values that we've known" (The New York Times, July 30, 1979:A6).

Closely related to, and flowing from this situation is the classical problem of legitimacy. Michael Hudson (1977) has appropriately subtitled his recent book on Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy. He views the malaise in Arab politics as the result of insufficient legitimacy accorded by the people to their ruling structures, ideologies, and leaders; and he concludes the basic requirement for legitimacy - meaningful political participation - has not been met anywhere in the Arab world, nor is it likely to be me in the near future. Geertz (1973:317) has argued that the problem of legitimacy is "peculiarly acute in a country in which long-term colonial domination created a political system that was national in scope but not in complexion...It is a question of immediacy, of experiencing what the state 'does' as proceeding naturally from a familiar 'we'". Geertz's account of Sukarno's problems in Indonesia could be equally appropriate for so many leaders in the Third World. He describes Sukarno's major task as "dispelling the aura of alienness from the institutions of modern government" (Geertz, 1973:317); and his manipulation of symbols was "designed to make the nation-state seem indigenous" (Ibid. :318).

Geertz perceptively observes: "This conceptual dislocation - the putting into question of the most familiar frames of moral and intellectual perception and the vast shift of sensibility thereby set in motion - forms the proper subject of cultural studies of new state politics" (Geertz, 1973:318). He portrays the dilemma of men in the Third World as attempting to remain themselves

while keeping pace with the twentieth century. According to Geertz, this produces the tense conjunction of cultural conservatism and political radicalism which is at the nerve of the new state nationalism. He portrays the situation in Indonesia as follows: "Thus a paralyzing incongruity grew up between the ideological framework within which the formal institutions of the would-be powerhouse state were constructed and operated and that within which the overall political formulation of the, also would-be, nation took shape" (Geertz, 1973:321). The cultural disarray created and fed upon by fifty years of political change in Indonesia analysed by Geertz bears a remarkable similarity to the events vividly portrayed by Naipaul in his fictitious African setting. In both we get scenes of people caught in the chaos caused by eroding social institutions and facing the abyss of meaninglessness caused by the undermining of the taken-for-grantedness of traditional shared meanings, and by the failure of the newly created symbolic universes to provide a sufficient sense of coherence and meaning. As in the previously mentioned case of the Soviets, these examples from the Third World illustrate relative failure in the attempt to close the gaps between culture and political structures through ideological manipulation and relative political repression.

SYNCRETISM AS A CULTURAL PROCESS OF CHANGE

However, political change is not always as disruptive and disorienting in its impact. The impact of change is cushioned in situations in which continuity underlies apparently dramatic changes. Spiro (1968:562) provides a psychological dimension in helping to explain this phenomena stating that, "Any change entails cognitive restructuring; the more dramatic the change, the greater the restructuring required. Although cognitive maps seem to be highly resistant to change, it is frequently observed that the acceptance of innovations is impeded by cognitive blocks. If innovations are accepted, they are sufficiently assimilated to traditional cognitive orientations, often rendering dramatic changes that are more apparent than real."

Similarly Huntington and Dominguez (1975:18) observe, "Political cultures rarely give way completely to the new, no matter how ruthless the impact of innovation." For example, the impact of the policies of colonial powers "induced noncongruence between the previously existing political culture and the new or drastically modified political structures" (Ibid). They define congruence between political culture and political structures as "a high degree of compatibility between political roles and structures on the one hand, and the central political values of the system on the other" (Ibid. :16). They characterize the two fundamental patterns of response to colonialism as acculturation to the Western model or cultural resistance. In the former case of cultural borrowing where the breakdown of preexisting convergence between culture and structure brought about change, they propose to analyze the process in terms of syncretism. While in complete agreement with the proposal I note that the assumption of the existence of congruence between culture and structure in all societies prior to European colonialism is undoubtedly not well founded, and that the existence of such congruence is a matter for historical research rather than a priori assumptions.

> Syncretism occurs when an overt form of one culture is not perceived in the same fashion by members of another but is perceived in such a way that it can be reinterpreted to conform to the borrowing culture's own patterns of meaning and yet retain essentially its original function. Syncretism, therefore, is a process of reinterpretation with retention of the original function. The probability of acceptance of new political cultural forms is increased to the extent that innovations are susceptible to reinterpretation in the conceptual framework of the recipient group. (Huntington and Dominguez, 1975:18 with a reference to Foster, 1962).

This is only a partial view of the process of syncretism. For example, it fails to take into consideration the fact that old cultural forms may be maintained, but with new meanings and/or new functions given them as the result of syncretism. For example, many traditionally religious

holidays have been effectively nationalized (and to a large extent secularized) in contemporary Israel. Whereas for the religious minority they still retain religious significance, for the secular majority the nationalist meanings are more salient. Whitaker (1970:454) shows that, "the introduction of democratic elections alongside the ubiquitous custom of neman sarauta in Northern Nigeria is one example of the possibility that in some situations an old institution may continue actively to operate co-extensively with a new institution with which it shares certain important features. In such situations, to ask questions about only what happens to the innovation may be to overlook the impact of that innovation on a comparable preexisting pattern that persists."

Whitaker objects that, "the concept of syncretism seems to be primarily directed to an interest in the fate of the institution being introduced, rather than to a concern with the destiny of the old institution through which the new institution is interpreted. This concept presupposes situations of innovation in which the new institution or pattern has displaced or is in process of displacing the old. But clearly not all situations of innovation are ones in which gradual displacement is taking place" (Whitaker, 1970:454). While I am in complete sympathy with his desire to show equal concern for the fate of old institutions and patterns, I am convinced that the fault lies with tne manner in which some scholars apply the concept of syncretism, not with the concept itself. The standard dictionary definition of syncretism is the union or attempted union of conflicting parties or principles. An anthropological definition is "the reconciliation of two or more cultural systems or elements, with the modification of both" (Burger, 1966:103, emphasis added). From an anthropological perspective the focus is clearly on reciprocal influence and change. I therefore do not consider the term Whitaker introduces, 'institutional convergence' as therefore being a broader concept than syncretis which has the advantage of having wider familiarity and acceptance.

Whitaker makes an additional point which bears on the formulation of the framework I am developing. He shows that the traditional elite in Northern Nigeria assimilated the modern competitive electoral process without adopting many of the fundamental objectives which they were intended to serve. He therefore urges that a distinction be made between an adoption of form and an adoption of function. In the case, he analyzed the reinterpretation of new political forms in terms of traditional cultural meanings provided new means for the gratification of traditional ends. Whitaker proposes the following factors be taken into consideration:

> (1) a distinction between formal and functional aspects of innovation...(2) the necessity for stipulating specific conditions under which reinterpretation leads to formal or functional innovation (or rejection), respectively... (3) the necessity to make clear precisely in what sense two institutions are comparable; (4) the possibility that reinterpretation may have multiple or conflicting implications... (5) the need for some kind of objective index for identifying and measuring the degree of absorption of an innovation. (Whitaker, 1970:456).

In his detailed analysis of syncretism, Burger argues that the cultural blending, combining, and reconciling interaction of syncretism suggests that an innovation would have proved inharmonious, had it not been altered. He suggests that the meeting of any two cultures does not automatically produce syncretism.

> All other things being equal, the earliest arrival tends to become 'canalized,' or crystallized. A later arrival must ordinarily adjust to the going pattern. This is secondary acculturation...syncretism rather occurs when the invaded ecosystem has not been satisfactorily meeting the inhabitant's needs. There is an opportunity in the ecological niche within the existing eidos [the cognitive part of the cultural structure made up of the criteria of credibility, the logic used in thinking and acting, and the basic ideas by which the members of a culture organize and interpret experience]; there is a '<u>lebenstraum</u> gap'. It may be economic, ideological, or otherwise. Even a <u>lebenstraum</u> gap does not assure syncretism, however. For decades of oppression or archaism may have readied a populace for revolution. It may then reject gradualism, the basis of syncretism. (Burger, 1966:105-6).

Huntington and Dominguez (1975:19) argue that, "Acculturation through syncretism is likely to proceed in a gradual and orderly fashion in instrumental cultures that are confronted with European culture; consummatory culture, on the other hand, will either resist all change (a change in one sphere is very threatening because it affects everything else) or, when they change, change totally and rapidly. They may appear, therefore, in revolutionary form". Referring to the work of Apter (1965:83-94) and Eisenstadt (1966:2-5, 156-7) they argue that instrumental cultures are more capable than consummatory cultures - which link most social relationships with the religious sphere and ascribe religious meanings or value to most patterns of behavior - of perceiving similarities with other cultures and reinterpreting them. They conclude that the inability of consummatory cultures to engage in syncretic change often leads to radical change; and they cite China and Vietnam as illustrative examples.

I have already mentioned my criticism that in spite of their reminders that they are dealing with ideal types, Huntington and Dominguez tend to reify their concepts. The very fact that they give examples of whole cultures which are supposed to characterize or represent the ideal types implies that such types actually exist in the real world. I find such sweeping generalizations about highly complex cultures extending over lengthy historical periods to be of limited utility. Even at this very general level of argumentation, they fail to make clear exactly what it is about consummatory cultures which prevents them from engaging in syncretic change, other than their focus on religious cultural values and patterns. They cite the example of India to which they attribute consummatory cultural values in areas other than politics, and argue that because politics was separate from the consummatory system of values it could contribute to the legitimation of the syncretic process of 'sanskritization' or caste-climbing. Yet Indian culture is a marvelous example of the process

of syncretism, the merging and blending of so many religious cultural influences, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Pagan, etc. In fact the bulk of anthropological research on syncretism has been the study of religion. For example, Barnett (1953:54-5) contends that, "The fusion of religious forms and beliefs is the type instance of syncretism...Early Christianity was markedly receptive. Catholicism in its ministrations to native groups...still is. Usually Protestantism is not." In fact the view of religious cultural values implicit in the typology proposed by Huntington and Dominguez reflects both a cultural bias, i.e. viewing all religions from the perspective of Judaeo-Christian cultural tradition, and a rather narrow and rigid interpretation of this tradition. It is highly doubtful that Judaism and Christianity would have survived as long as they did, had they not been fairly flexible at crucial stages of historical development. Certainly the literature on Hinduism (of which I shall have more to say shortly) and on African religious belief, e.g. Horton (1964) indicates far greater flexibility than postulated in the category consummatory systems. Therefore it is extremely difficulty to accept the claim of Huntington and Dominguez that consummatory systems tend to be incapable of syncretic change if it is because of their religious nature. And if it were not for their religious nature, we have not been told by Huntington and Dominguez what it is about them that prevents their receptivity to syncretism.

Perhaps the key is in their parenthetical aside, "(a change in one sphere is very threatening because it affects everything else)" (Huntington and Dominguez, 1975:19). But there are in fact very few examples in the literature on culture change which can be found demonstrating this version of the ill-fated 'domino theory' empirically manifesting itself. In fact, change in one sphere does not generally affect everything else. As Burger (19[illegible]) has shown, syncretism is the most common form of acculturation; and it invariably involves change in

some spheres and continuity in others. Innovation is rarely novel in all respects. There are a number of more refined treatments of the concept of syncretism than that of Huntington and Dominguez. For example Linton (1936:403) observed that since innovation differs in its particulars, "each element should be examined in terms of form, meaning, function, and process." This complements Whitaker's distinction between formal and functional aspects of innovation mentioned previously. Burger, arguing that innovations have essentially intrinsic and extrinsic properties, distinguishes seven types of syncretistic processes based on a logical progression.[6] Such studies suggest the complexity and the richness of variety which is inherent in this important process of change. Ethnographic studies carried out in specific socio-cultural contexts with reference to such frameworks, e.g. Wagner (1975), will undoubtedly contribute to their refinement. In my opinion, one of the most spohisticated refinements and applications of the concept of syncretism is Singer's (1971) essay "Beyond Tradition and Modernity in Madras". In this essay Singer develops and applies the theory of Sanskritization of the emminent Indian anthropologist M. N. Srinivas (1966).

SANSKRITIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF SYNCRETISM

Singer (1971:163) persuasively argues that, "The 'traditionalism' of Indian civilization lies...in its capacity to incorporate innovations into an expanding and changing structure of culture and society. This capacity is reflected in a series of adaptive mechanisms and processes for dealing with the novel, the foreign, the strange. The operation of these adaptive mechanisms makes possible a kind of 'cultural protoplasm'." His case study of change in Madras illustrates that the relationship between modernization and change is "a historical process in which the new and the foreign are culturally differentiated as such from the indigenous traditions, then tried out in a 'neutral' area, and eventually selectively integrated into an 'essential' core of indigenous traditions, which has itself changed in order to incorporate the new items." (Singer, 1971:165).

This process, Singer argues, is dependent upon certain features of Hinduism and Indian society. These features include the following: 1) Hinduism comprises many different paths to salvation which involves different duties depending on peoples different stations in life; 2) Hinduism distinguishes between theoretical and practical levels of religious and philosophical truths; and 3) Hinduism has a scriptural model of social organization - the varna scheme of four orders of society. Singer's detailed analysis of the dynamics of specific cultural processes contrasts sharply with, and raises serious questions about the utility of Huntington and Dominguez's attempt to generalize the characteristics of 'sanskritization' by identifying them with agglomerative cultures with hierarchical or vertical traditions of social organization, e.g. pre-independence Latin America. When one compares their list of eight major characteristics of the general process of Sanskritization (cf. Huntington and Dominguez, 1975:25-6) with Singer's analysis, it becomes apparent that much of the explanatory strength of the culturally specific concept is lost in making it more general. (Similarly anthropologists with knowledge of India have found the use of caste as it is applied to America by sociologists to be an "invidious analogy," cf. Moffatt, 1978). As Singer says, "The comparative cultural study of how different societies deal with innovation and change is too underdeveloped to permit precise comparisons" (Singer, 1971:187). I contend that this same deficiency in our knowledge makes such attempts at generalization premature.

Singer reveals the traditionalism of India to contain a series of mechanisms for adapting and accomodating innovation and change. He elaborates these mechanisms or processes of incorporating and validating innovations as: "enclavement, neutralization, compartmentalization, vicarious ritualization, typological stylization, reinterpretation, archaization, and others" (Singer, 1971:184-5). He argues further that, "Since there is no single 'official' definition and interpretation of 'the tradition', ample latitude exists for

commentators and interpreters to adapt it to changing needs and circumstances. This fluidity and relativity in the definition of 'tradition' is given philosophic sanction in Indian systems of thought..." (Singer, 1971:185). Singer's portrayal of the Indian type of syncretism known as Sanskritization reveals "a creative incorporation of contemporary events and innovations into the living and changing structure of tradition" (Ibid.:186).

Singer strongly rejects the old dichotomous categories of 'traditional' and 'modern' and suggests that, "The problem faced by these 'traditional' societies is now to continue converting the 'raw' and 'uncooked' events of history into 'cooked' and assimilable 'cultural traditions'" (Ibid.:188). Through his analysis of urbanization and change in Madras, he shows that this takes place in a sequence of phases in which both foreign and domestic innovations are selected and incorporated into the layers of so-called modern and so-called traditional layers of the indigenous civilization. In sum, the cultural processes associated with Westernization and modernization are neither unilateral diffusions of elements of Western culture into 'traditional' societies nor do they originate with European colonialism. They are processes endemic in the history of Indian society and represent a kind of 'cultural metabolism' which regulates for each a distinctive balance between cultural continuity and cultural innovation. Singer's analysis suggests that:

> life is always 'change and uncertainty' and that it derives meaning and validity not from 'scientific history' but from the cultural philosophy - the world view and value system - of a society. The fact that one society's cultural philosophy bestows meaning and validity on incessant change and the present, and another's bestows it on the traditional past, does not enable us easily to decide which is the 'scientifically true' cultural philosophy. It may be as great a myth for one society to assume that it can get along without any traditions, except 'the tradition of the new', as it is for another to assume that all change is eternal recurrence of an ancestral past. (Singer, 1971:194).

CONCLUSION

The thrust of Singer's analysis and conclusions brings into serious question the relevance and utility of such constructs as Huntington and Dominguez's "political cultural requisites for modernizing political change" (1975:32). Not only do such models carry unfortunate overtones of a subtle form of cultural ethnocentrism, but they also tend to lead toward reification. The typification of entire societies/cultures through dichotomous categorization precludes conceptual sensitivity to the phenomenological variability and complexity of the incorporation of competing definitions of reality into traditional frameworks of meaning which are themselves significantly changed by their absorption of innovations.

Whereas Huntington and Dominguez (1975:29) correctly hypothesize that, "Change in political culture arises out of an instability between central values and structures," I am convinced that the frameworks they propose lack the sensitivity and refinement to facilitate the kind of empirical studies required to verify this hypothesis. However, Geertz (1967:249) who observed that, "man's need to live in a world to which he can attribute some significance, whose essential import he feels he can grasp, often diverges from his concurrent need to maintain a functioning social organism," offers an example of an approach which I think in the long run is much more likely to succeed in doing so. Man's search for meaning and significance and his need to maintain viable political institutions frequently conflict, particularly in Third-World societies where the disparity or incongruity between culture and political structure are most conspicuous. As Huntington and Dominguez suggest, syncretism is a potentially fruitful concept to develop for furthering our understanding of the processes of political change, but there are more adequate and developed formulations of the concept than the one they proposed.

The political anthropological approach to the study of political change which I have proposed is based on a phenomenological understanding of culture as a humanly constructed structure of shared meanings; and it is firmly rooted in the contextural analysis of specific socio-economic and political environments. I contend that this approach is more capable of comprehending, without distorting, the complexity of realities in the Third World (and elsewhere) than are the more conventional approaches to the study of political change based on models of 'modernization'and 'development'. In the long run, this approach is more likely to lead to the cumulative building of generalizations and hypothesis with which the other models begin. Hopefully generalizations built upon the cumulative in-depth studies of diverse contexts will provide a firmer foundation in reality for the construction of theories than those produced on the topic thus far.

FOOTNOTES

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[2]I note that Geertz (1967:233) formulated this relationship earlier. Evidently Huntington and Dominguez arrived at their hypothesis independently since they do not refer to Geertz's formulation. I came to read both after having come to a similar conceptualizatin of the relationships.

[3]In his introductory chapter, Whitaker (1979) comprehensively and effectively deals with this point.

[4]My formulation of the socially constructed nature of society is largely derived from the seminal work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) which was in turn strongly influenced by the pioneering work of Alfred Schutz (1962 and 1964).

[5]Various revilalization movements can be viewed as manifestations of similar phenomena.

[6]The following is a summary of Burger's typology: a) 'quantitative syncretism' - gradualistic, single-step, part-way, or quantitatively compromised syncretism whereby the offending parts of the innovation are divided out; b) 'supplementary syncretism' - involves slight mutual modification incorporating special innovations which fill specific needs or lacks; c) 'substitutive syncretism' - mutually subtractive alteration, the simultaneous elimination of rivalrous elements from both contacting systems; d) 'phasic syncretism' - alternated incorporation in phases over time; e) 'simulative syncretism' - when an illusory devise mutually acculturates and which changes principally the legend; f) 'cryptophery' or 'hidden-trend syncretism' - offers some immediately acceptable artifact which subtly undermines and leads to even greater dependence and cultural borrowing; and g) "Sanskritization' or 'simulative enhancement' - self-enhancing simulated syncretism.

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